DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 873 CS 009 916

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TITLE Implementation of an Educational Program for Parents of Students Enrolled in a Center for Reading and Learning Disabilities.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 117p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Learning Disabilities; *Parent Attitudes; *Parent Child Relationship; Parent Conferences; *Parent Education; Parent Materials; Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Program Effectiveness; *Reading Difficulties; Remedial Reading

ABSTRACT

A program was designed to address the problem of parents who are uninformed or misinformed about their child's reading or learning disability, resulting in frustration and the inability to interact effectively with their child in academic activities. The program was implemented at a private reading and learning center which serves about 125 students weekly, from kindergarten through college level. The program's goals were: (1) to inform parents of the specific type of problem their child was experiencing; (2) to help parents develop an understanding of their child's disabilities; (3) to help parents develop skills to assist their child with academic exercises; (4) to provide parents an opportunity to interact in a group situation; (5) to establish a communication link between the center and the child's school; and (6) to provide literature and printed information for parents on their child's disability. The program included an assessment of parents' knowledge, regular scheduled conferences, group meetings, communicating with the child's school, and literature on disabilities presented in layman's terms. Data from questionnaires, interviews, homework surveys, and parents' assessment of reading materials were analyzed, revealing that five of the six goals were achieved. (Six tables of data are included, and 57 references are attached. Eleven appendixes, containing the instruments used to evaluate the program, samples of parents' responses, a list of suggested reading materials for parents, and a program brochure, are attached.) (SR)

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Implementation of an Educational Program for Parents of Students Enrolled in a Center for Reading and Learning Disabilities

by

Sarah F. Allison

Cluster XXV

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A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1989

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Sarah F. Allison under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment by the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

January 20, 1990
Date of Final
Approval of Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iii
LIST OF TABLES		v
ABSTRACT		vi
Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Community	1
	Author's Work Setting and Role	2
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	6
	Problem Description	6
	Problem Documentation	7
	Causative Analysis	11
	The Related Literature	14
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	25
	Statement of General Goals	25
	Behavioral Expectations	25
	Evaluation Instruments	28
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	31
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	31
	Description of Selected Solutions	33
	Report of Action Taken	37
V	RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	40
	Results	40
	Conclusions	52
	Recommendations	58
	Dissemination	60
REFERENCES		61
Appendices		68
A	PARENT OPINION-AS I SEE MY CHILD	69
B	INVITATION TO PARENT'S MEETING	71
C	PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE	73
D	PARENT INTERVIEW	77

E HOMEWORK SURVEY FOR PARENTS 79

F SUGGESTED READING MATERIALS FOR PARENTS 84

G PARENT BROCHURE 87

H PARENT EVALUATION OF WRITTEN MATERIALS. 91

I PROFESSIONAL CRITIQUE OF POCKET BROCHURE. 93

J SAMPLES OF PARENTS' RESPONSES ITEM 20 95

K SAMPLES OF PARENTS' RESPONSES ITEM 10 98

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Parent Opinion As I See My Child.	8
2	Parent Questionnaire. . . . . 10 Positive/Negative Items	41
3	Parent Questionnaire. . . . . Item 2 Responses	43
4	Parent Questionnaire. . . . . Item 3 Responses	44
5	Parent Questionnaire. . . . . Item 4 Responses	46
6	Parents' Actions and Emotions Relevant. . to Assisting Their Child with Academic Activities	50

ABSTRACT

Implementation of an Educational Program for Parents of Students Enrolled in a Center for Reading and Learning Disabilities. Allison, Sarah, F., 1989: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.
Descriptors: Parent Education/Parent Conferences/Parent Participation/Parent Materials/Learning Disabilities/Parent Workshop/Reading Disabilities/Parent-teacher Cooperation/Elementary Education/Youth Education

This practicum was designed to address the problem of parents who are uninformed or misinformed about their child's reading or learning disability. This limited knowledge of their child's deficiencies results in parental frustration. Parents are unable to interact effectively with their child in academic activities.

The writer's goals were: (a) to inform parents of the specific type of problem their child is experiencing, (b) to help parents develop an understanding of their child's reading and learning disabilities, (c) to help parents develop skills to assist their child with academic exercises, (d) to provide parents an opportunity to interact in a group situation, (e) to establish a communication link between the center and the child's school, and (f) to provide literature and printed information for parents to help develop an understanding of their child's disability. In addressing these goals, the writer implemented a program of parent education which included an assessment of parents' knowledge, regular scheduled conferences, group meetings, telecommunicating with the child's school, and literature presented on layman's terms to provide information relevant to their child's reading or learning disabilities.

The results of this practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that five of the six goals were obtained. Parents' knowledge and understanding of their child's disabilities increased through the parent education program of conferences, and relevant printed information. A communication link between the reading center, school, and parents was established which augmented the parents' knowledge and helped reduce parental stress. Parents gained additional information and further developed their communication lines through the group meetings. The development of a brochure as a natural outgrowth of the program enhanced the available reading material for parent education. Parents, teachers, and other professionals expressed a need for this succinct information with a question and answer format, glossary of professional terms, suggestions for helping one's child, and homework tips.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Community

The reading and learning center is a private center serving approximately 125 students weekly. Students range in academic performance from kindergarten through college levels.

The socioeconomic composition of the community is as varied as the ethnic make-up. The center is located in an area zoned professional-business and is adjacent to the city government complex. To the east of the center is a section of upper upper class residents who inhabit a section of the city touted to be one of the wealthiest areas of the nation. To the south of the center is an apartment complex area that is occupied mainly by upper lower class residents, many of whom are immigrants or American blacks. To the west of the center is an area of middle and upper middle class people.

The center is located in an urban area that is composed of multiethnic groups of people. This urban

area is the second largest city in the state and is located in a prime position to assimilate immigrants. Therefore, there are many students enrolled in the school system and the center who are currently learning English or who speak English as a second language.

Author's Work Setting and Role

The center's philosophy is success oriented. Each student is taught with positive reinforcement and encouragement. The concept of successful achievement begetting additional success has been the mainstay of the center's philosophy. The role of the center is to design and implement the student's academic program to insure that success will occur. Emphasis is also placed on the development of a positive self concept through the building of the student's self esteem.

The center's programs are multimedia in design and utilize a variety of multisensory techniques. Tachistoscopic devices, computers, taped programs, guided and controlled readers, manipulative tactile aids, and a wide variety of machines and instruments are employed by the teachers in instructing students. In addition, books and an assortment of printed programs are used.

Sessions at the center vary with regard to each

individual student's needs. Some students attend a minimum of a one hour session per week, while others attend two, three, or a maximum of four sessions weekly. The hours scheduled for students are from 2:30 to 10:00 P.M. as the center's services are supplementary to the student's major academic program. All students work on programs which are individually designed and administered according to the needs of the student. Student needs are assessed by initial evaluations upon entry to the program. Based on this evaluation, an intensive program is implemented to alleviate the student's deficiencies, build strengths, and meet set goals of achievement.

The staff of the reading and learning center is composed of ten people. Five staff members are teachers who are certified, experienced, and trained especially for work at the center. Three of the five also hold positions in the public school system as classroom teachers. Three staff members are teacher's aides. The sixth member of the staff is a teacher who is also an office manager-bookkeeper. The office manager arranges appointments, keeps records of attendance and financial records, does billing, and in general runs the office.

The writer is the owner, director, and active teacher in the center. Responsibilities assumed by the

writer include administering of all evaluations including initial testing, retesting, and posttesting. The writing of all reports for parents, schools, and teachers is also done by the writer. After evaluating the student, the author designs an individual program based on the weaknesses and strengths of the student. Lesson plans are written on a weekly basis by the writer to insure the expeditious implementation of the program. In addition, the writer is involved in the day-to-day teaching of the students.

Public relations also falls into the realm of the job of director; consequently, the writer is involved in conferences, school visits, workshops, lectures, and staffings. Additionally, the business operation is a part of the writer's responsibility and involves the decisions regarding expenditures for overhead such as rent, equipment, supplies, and salaries. The writer must also supervise accounts, billings, collections, and fees charged.

More than 20 years ago, the writer created the concept of a reading and learning center that would be equipped to meet the needs of all students from kindergarten through college levels. Working together with her husband, who is also a teacher, they established two reading and learning centers which

continue to prosper and flourish utilizing a success-oriented multi-media approach to learning.

The writer holds a B.S. in elementary education and an M.S. with a dual major in exceptional child education and reading and a minor in psychology. She taught in public schools for 10 years as a classroom teacher, resource teacher for all exceptionalities, and as a master teacher for reading instruction. In all, the writer has spent 28 years in the teaching profession.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Parents of students enrolled at the reading and learning center were uninformed or misinformed regarding their child's deficiencies or disabilities; therefore, they exhibited little or no understanding of their child's disabilities and often made unrealistic demands for performance on their child. Parents verbally expressed their frustrations over their child's inability to succeed academically and their own inefficacy in offering assistance, especially in homework activities. Parents were also frustrated by their inability to formulate questions because of their limited knowledge of their child's disabilities, yet were bewildered by their child's performance in reading and other academic activities. It was difficult to find time to answer, or prepare answers to the many questions that parents had during the course of a regular scheduled session at the center.

An increased understanding of their child's reading

and learning disabilities is necessary to enable parents to be more effective in working with their child in academic or homework activities. For the benefit of the entire family, greater parental understanding is required for parents to accept the child's disabilities and develop realistic expectations of the child's performance. Briefly stated then, the problem was that parents of students with reading and learning disabilities were uninformed or misinformed about their child's deficiencies. They exhibited little or no understanding of their child's reading or learning disabilities, or how to cope successfully with academic activities at home.

Problem Documentation

In phone interviews prior to scheduling an appointment for the student's initial evaluation, the parents are asked, "Do you know what kind of problem your child is experiencing? Do you understand why your child cannot perform to your expectations in school?" Fifteen parents out of 20 questioned responded negatively.

At the initial appointment for the student's evaluation, the student's parent was given a Parent Opinion form of 5 items (see Appendix A) to be completed

while the student was being evaluated.

The results of the questionnaire showed that of the 50 possible responses, 33 were negative responses relevant to the parents' understanding of their child's reading and learning difficulties. Only 13 responses were positive, and one parent omitted 4 items, indicating total lack of understanding and response.

Table 1

Parent Opinion As I See My Child

Parent	Positive	Negative	Omitted
1	2	3	0
2	0	5	0
3	0	5	0
4	2	3	0
5	1	4	0
6	2	3	0
7	2	3	0
8	2	3	0
9	1	4	0
10	1	0	4
Totals:	13	33	4

Dreher and Singer (1985) found that parents do not understand the information given them about their

child's standardized reading test scores or reading levels. Parents were often hesitant to admit their lack of understanding and only 22 percent of the parents contacted the school with questions about their child's test results.

Epstein (1986) stated that teachers did not make an effort to gain parental help. Fifty-eight percent of the parents reported that they rarely or never were asked by teachers to become involved in learning activities at home. Less than 30 percent reported that teachers gave suggestions for helping their children at home. Finally, over 80 percent stated that they would spend time with their children in academic activities if they were given instructions.

Guthrie (1982) reported that only 10 to 20 percent of parents of all educational levels were active supporters of their child's school activities and were consistent home teachers. Parents who were participants in school related activities were the ones who followed teachers' suggestions to read to their children, take them to the library, or work on other academic activities.

Kronick, (1980) stated that most parents of students with learning disabilities did not understand what a learning disability is. They usually viewed

their children as slow, but seemed unaware of the reasons why their children were experiencing difficulties.

Kroth (1985) determined that parents experienced various reactions after their child's disability had been diagnosed. Many parents experienced shock, denial, blame, guilt, anger, and sorrow after hearing that their child had a learning disability.

McLoughlin, Clark, Mauck, and Petrosko (1987) reported that more conservative parental views about their child's learning disabilities may have represented feelings of fear and frustration.

In a study of parents' reactions to their child's Individual Educational Program (IEP), Mowder (1980) found that parents felt only somewhat involved in their child's IEP. Parents expressed that they gained somewhat of an understanding of their child's needs. The general parental response was positive over school personnel providing IEP services.

Parents, especially parents of exceptional children, frequently experienced frustration and difficulties when trying to have their child diagnosed and placed in a suitable program (Simpson, 1982).

The problem of lack of parental understanding of their child's reading and learning disabilities was

documented at the center by questionnaires completed at the initial visit to the center. Further documentation was made through parent interviews during conferences with the center's director. Final documentation was in the form of surveys in which parents evaluated their own abilities and effectiveness in assisting their child in homework activities and exercises.

Causative Analysis

The problems parents of students with reading and learning disabilities experienced are the result of four main factors. Parents were given no specific information to educate or inform them regarding their child's disabilities. The information given was often in the form of staffing or group meetings in which the professionals explained the existing problems with very little interactive communication between parents and professionals. Written reports were often presented in language that was not comprehended by parents.

Many parent groups presented a series of loosely connected lectures which did not facilitate parental understanding and growth of critical knowledge which parents needed. Often these lectures focused on popular treatments or theories which were not research proven, and only fostered guilt, anxiety, or feelings of

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inadequacy and confusion on the part of the parents (Kronick, 1980).

Regular educational information does not deal with specific problems that a student may encounter in reading or learning. Most parent information newsletters, bulletins, and programs focused on the average child rather than the child experiencing the exceptional difficulties.

Teachers in a regular classroom setting are not themselves educationally prepared to cope with specific reading or learning problems, and are therefore unable to work effectively with parents to provide information to develop understanding about the students' difficulties.

Sipple (1985) reported that insufficiently trained regular education teachers resented having to make plans for handicapped students. He further found that regular education teachers also resented having to be accountable for handicapped students in their classroom. Teacher certification does not require classes or training in specific reading and learning disabilities, and most teachers are not experienced in helping develop parental understanding of specific learning or reading disabilities.

Dodd (1988) recognized this lack of training, "When

we depend on chance to prepare teachers to teach children with learning disabilities, it seldom produces the desired results" (p. 10). Simpson (1982) reported that while teachers have the greatest amount of parental contact, they have little or no training in counseling with parents. Parent conferencing and counseling remains the most neglected and underdeveloped skill in the repertoire of most educators (Simpson & Poplin, 1981).

Through the use of the cognitive problem solving model with implementation of education seminars, Switzer (1985) found that parental anxiety was decreased as understanding of learning disabilities increased. This parental understanding also resulted in more adequate functioning on the part of parents and children.

Teachers are in a very satisfactory position to participate in conferences with parents of exceptional children, as teachers have the most information about the child on a consistent basis. Furthermore, parents often demonstrate a level of trust and openness toward teachers. Simpson (1982) suggested that the logical step to take is to train educators to serve as many parental or family needs as appropriate.

The underlying problem of lack of parental understanding of their child's specific difficulties was

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The underlying problem of lack of parental understanding of their child's specific difficulties was

caused by inadequate or ineffective parent education. Parents had little or no printed information available written on layman's level rather than a professional level. Their own inquisitiveness was stymied by their lack of knowledge resulting an inability to formulate questions. In staff or group meetings in which the parents met with four to ten professionals, parents reported feeling overwhelmed or intimidated. This situation usually resulted in parents passively receiving information which they did not comprehend. Even parent support groups did not offer enough relevant information to help parents develop an understanding of their child's disabilities, as the group was eclectic in composition and usually did not focus on the specifics of their child's difficulties.

The Related Literature

A review of the relevant literature revealed a magnitude of information on parent educational programs. Allen and Freitag (1985) suggested a workshop to encourage parents and students to become cooperative learners in order to work and learn together.

Parents' roles in helping children improve their reading skills were reported by Auten (1980). The author suggested specific resources such as booklets,

guides, and programs to help parents with their children.

The importance of home-school relationships in the education of both handicapped and non-handicapped children, was discussed by Berger (1981). He further documented the need for parent involvement to achieve the best possible education for a child.

Brown and Jalongo (cited in Criscuolo, 1987) stated that parent conferences were rated by parents to be one of the most effective communication techniques. They suggested that parents (a) ask their child questions about school, (b) prepare a list of questions or concerns before the conference, (c) listen to the teacher and ask questions, and (d) use a team approach in solving problems.

A parents' workshop program had a significant effect on readiness scores in cognitive and language areas of the children whose parents attended the workshop (Burgess, 1982).

Three follow-up phone calls and one parent opinion questionnaire were used by Carlucci (1987) to determine whether or not parents were implementing academic recommendations. With this strategy, 80 percent of the parents followed the recommendations and 93 percent responded positively to the parents' questionnaire.

A parent program for the intermediate grades which included a variety of activities designed to gain the commitment of parents was found by Chisom (1988) to be an effective parent education program. The program included (a) establishing rapport with parents, (b) informing parents of planned programs, (c) gaining parents' commitment to work with their children, (d) forming committees to carry out a fund-raiser, (e) selecting and purchasing mailers, and (f) a variety of activities for parents including a luncheon.

Cochran and Henderson (1985) determined that parent education programs increased children's school performance.

According to Criscuolo (1980), communication fostered the best parent education program. He utilized several communication devices including booklets of reading activities for home use, reading progress letters, parents' brochures to answer questions and respond to concerns, parent activity sheets, parent conferences on test results, reading and shopping lists of books, toys, and games, and a newspaper program which included a special page for children.

Criscuolo (1983) outlined a program of parent involvement in which parents worked directly with their children to reinforce reading skills. This program

involved four specific types of home activities to supplement classroom instruction.

Daytime visits of parents to schools to observe classrooms and participate in informal discussions was a positive parent education experience reported by Criscuolo (1984). The communication between staff and parents was enhanced by the observation of classes.

A booklet providing step-by-step plans for a parent program to help parents understand their parenting roles as well as their role as a participant in their child's reading was developed by Fredericks and Taylor (1985). It was also stated that parent programs with a variety of activities should be designed for all grade levels and should involve all categories of parents including working parents, single parents, and new parents.

The Parent Effectiveness Training program (PET), a parent training program, was used by Giannotti and Doyle (1982) with parents of learning disabled students. They found positive changes in all five attitudes measured on the Parent Attitude Survey. The students also reported that they saw positive changes in their parents' attitudes toward their learning disabilities.

The influences of parents on the reading skills and habits of their children was examined by Greaney (1986). He concluded that it is the job of parents, along with

the school, to make reading a successful and pleasurable experience for the child in order to foster growth.

An effective parent organization which held weekly meetings of parents and teachers in which teachers conducted workshops to help parents cope with their children's educational needs and to reduce academic stress was established by Hamblin (1987).

The development of effective community-based parent education programs was urged by Heath (1987). He suggested that the following topics be included: (a) contemporary views of parenting, (b) parenting and psychological theory, (c) parenting strategies and techniques, (d) changing family configurations, and (e) developmental needs of children.

Helm and Kozloff (1986) concluded that parents who participated in extensive training programs felt greater confidence and had better understanding of ways to help their children overcome specific difficulties. The families who were in contact with professionals in parent training programs benefited more than those families who received the training material, but were not in contact with professionals. They also reported that children whose parents were involved in training showed improvements in behavior.

The involvement of parents in their children's

education can lead to highly accelerated achievement gains (Henderson, 1988). The author found that a home environment that is favorable to learning greatly affects the child. It was also found that parents developed better attitudes toward schools, and worked more with teachers to improve their child's academic success. Schools with parental involvement maintain higher levels of student achievement, as well as parental and community support.

According to Hills and Knowles (1987), the transfer and retention of skills learned in parent education programs occurred when the parents discovered their own personal meaning and understanding of their interactions with their children. They also concluded that parents often know what they want to occur with their children, but do not have the skills to put their ideas into practice.

A five-step parent involvement program with workshops was devised by Jenkins (1981). Parents were taught techniques to help their children with self concept development and behavior.

Knudstrup, K., Zimmermann, R., Nunn, M., and Vander Mel-Tack, J. (1983) developed an extensive glossary for parent use in an adult education class for parents of disabled children. They found this reference tool to be

beneficial in creating parent awareness and understanding of their child's disabilities.

A successful parent education program implemented through a series of seminars, relevant printed materials, a monthly newsletter, and the distribution of reprints of pertinent articles formed an effective parent education program (MacWright, 1985). This program was designed around a topic of interest expressed by parents to sensitize parents to their role and to their children's needs.

In a study of learning disabled (LD) students, McLoughlin, Clark, Mauck, and Petrosko (1987) found that LD students continue to require support services both in school and outside of school. Teachers and counselors were important resources for LD students to help promote communication between parents and children. Outside the school, parents received support from parent groups or from family counseling.

No one particular parent education program was significantly more effective than another (Powell, 1986). The main functions of curriculum in parent education were to stimulate parents to look carefully at their relationships with their children and encourage parents' interaction with staff and other parents. Powell further reported that the recent increase in

interest in parent education programs was a result of the following: (a) concern over pressures in today's families such as divorce, working mothers, and economic uncertainties; (b) focus of early intervention programs on the importance of parents in a child's development; (c) family influences on child development, quality of family childrearing, and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

In a project for semiliterate intercity parents, conducted by Raim (1980), a reading club called the Parent Assistance Program was formed. Parents were instructed in how to teach their children at home to encourage them and reinforce skills. In this project, the parents reported improvements in their own reading skills, as well as improvements in their children's skills.

A summary of parent involvement research by Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) stated, "Given proper guidance and support, parents can supplement in powerful fashion, learning that takes place in school" (p. 84). The evidence is also that parents' potential to assist their children is tremendous. To combat difficulties in utilizing parents in schools, the authors suggested (a) involving parents from planning through implementation, (b) involving other school personnel, (c) ensuring

strong leadership, (d) planning for long term goals, and (e) evaluating the program periodically.

At the Home and School Institute, Rich (1985) developed the four rules for successful parent involvement programs: (a) link parents' involvement directly to the learning of their own children, (b) provide ways for families to teach academic skills at home, (c) link the school's work to the community, and (d) provide for parent involvement at all levels of schooling. Rich further emphasized that without support from groups of parents, teachers, and administrators, a home involvement program would not succeed.

The most helpful parents are those who are growing themselves (Schoonover, 1983). These parents who can offer solid guidance to their child, without prolonging the child's dependence, are the most effective parents.

The reconceptualization of parent involvement to benefit parents as well as children was advocated by Seefeldt (1985). Parental stress can be reduced by meeting parents' needs with sensitivity, real support, and true collaboration between home and school. Seefeldt reiterated the findings that when parents are involved in their children's education, achievement is increased. In addition, the true collaborative involvement between parents and schools enhanced the

parents' self-esteems and feelings of effectiveness, which benefited both the children and school.

In a research review of parent involvement and reading achievement, Silvern (1985) reported that parent education programs, both informational and training programs to instruct parents about the teaching of reading, have been successful. It was found that for parents to be effective in promoting their child's reading achievement, teachers needed to provide specific requests and recommendations for the parents in regard to time, reading materials, and questions for thinking or cognitive activities.

Tizard, Schofield, and Hewison (1982) in a study of parental involvement in the teaching of reading, reported a significant improvement in children who received extra reading practice at home. The gains were consistently made by children of all ablilty levels who read with their parents at home.

A paired-reading technique for parents and children was used by Topping (1987). Students tripled their performance in word recognition, and quintupled their reading comprehension levels when reading with their parents. In addition, the paired-reading technique resulted in higher enjoyment of reading reported by the students.

The literature revealed that parent education is an important issue and factor in a child's education. According to Smith (1988), "The role of parents in the education of their children has become one of the most prominent aspects in the reform movement in education" (p. 68).

It was acknowledged that students performed better in school when parents were involved in their child's academic program. Many forms of parent educational programs have been tried and tested to determine the most effective methods of educating parents. Many studies have shown that parents need not only education to gain insight, but a persistent program of communication to provide support, encouragement, and guidance for continued growth.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

The parental understanding of a child's reading or learning disability is essential in fostering a child's academic growth. Therefore, the goals in general were to increase the parents' knowledge and understanding of their child's reading and learning disabilities in order to enable parents to be more effective in assisting their own child.

Behavioral Expectations

Over a period of eight months, parents of students enrolled at the reading and learning center will be provided an educational program to help them develop an understanding of their child's reading and learning disabilities. This educational program will help parents become more effective in coping with their child's deficiencies and assisting their child in academically related activities such as homework. Parents will be able to make realistic demands on their

child for academic performance.

Objective One stated that parents will be informed as to the specific type of problem their child is experiencing. On a questionnaire of 20 items, parents will score a positive response on 7 out of 10 positive/negative items.

Objective Two stated that parents will develop an understanding of their child's reading and learning disabilities as demonstrated through an oral interview of 10 questions in which the director scores responses as the interview is conducted. One of the ten items is open-ended to elicit parent's responses and gain indepth feedback. Parents will score 7 out of 10 positive responses.

Objective Three stated that parents will be able to assist their child with academic exercises with greater effectiveness and more realistic expectations. This parent assistance will be measured by a homework survey of 20 items in which parents will demonstrate ability to work effectively with their child on homework, as well as show realistic expectations with 14 out of 20 positive responses.

Objective Four provided that parents will have the opportunity to attend two programs designed to present information on reading and learning disabilities. These

group sessions will involve presentation of materials, group discussions, followed by question and answer periods. These programs will be a volunteer service in which 100 invitations (see Appendix B) will be issued to parents, teachers, psychologists, and school administrators who are involved with students enrolled at the center. Attendance of 30 parents and teachers will meet the objective's standard for success.

Objective Five stated that communication will be established with the student's school through a phone conference. This initial call will begin the link between the center and the child's school to foster team work and understanding of the child's disability. This objective will be met with 20 out of 25, or 80 percent of the calls completed.

Objective Six provided that literature and materials available for parents from multiple sources will be reviewed and rated. Then a summary of the most succinct, practical, and beneficial materials will be made available to the parents and teachers at the center and in the schools. Materials from the city, county, and university libraries will be reviewed, as well as materials available from the International Reading Association (IRA), and the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (ACLD). Government

publications will be included in the summary of available materials reviewed and recommended. Parents will respond to the materials on a Parent Evaluation of Written Materials form of 10 items, with 7 out of 10 positive responses.

The oral Parent Interview record sheets, Homework Survey for Parents, Parent Questionnaire, and Parent Evaluation of Written Materials all provide opportunities for individual expression through open ended items for recording unexpected events.

Evaluation Instruments

The growth in parental understanding of the type and symptoms of their child's reading or learning disabilities was evaluated by a 20 item Parent Questionnaire (see Appendix C). The questionnaire administered at the initial visit of the parent and child was readministered at the termination of the student's program at the center. A comparison of initial and final positive and negative responses was made to assess the growth in the parents' understanding of their child's disabilities.

The Parent Interview (see Appendix D), consisting of 10 items was given at the end of the initial conference following the evaluation results and

explanations of the students' performance. The positive, negative, and open ended responses to the interviews were recorded.

A homework survey of 20 items (see Appendix E) was completed by parents after the child had been enrolled at the center for one month, and parents had been given a brochure of homework guidelines. Parents demonstrated ability to work effectively with their child on homework and showed realistic expectations with 14 out of 20 positive responses to the homework survey.

The objective of developing communication lines between the center, parents, and child's school began with the child's first visit to the center. The completion of a phone conference with the student's teacher was a measure of the communication between the center and the school.

Attendance at the two parent education sessions at the center was a measure of the objective to provide a parent education program involving parents, teachers in the schools, and teachers at the center.

The assessment of the relevant literature was made and a listing of recommended materials was made available for parents as presented in Appendix F. The pamphlets written by this writer specifically for parents to increase their understanding of reading and

learning disabilities were organized into a pocket brochure (see Appendix G). These brochures were reviewed by parents and other professionals. A record of responses to the Parent Evaluation of Written Materials form (see Appendix H) was made with 7 out of 10 positive responses given.

Additional evaluations and reviews of the reading materials given to parents were made by several professionals including a school psychologist, clinical psychologist, classroom teacher, Chapter I teacher, social worker, and a pediatrician. These professionals responded with 4 out of 6 positive responses on the Professional Critique of Pocket Brochure (see Appendix I).

The data obtained was presented in table form. The tables included the summary of positive and negative responses for the questionnaire, interviews, and surveys, as well as the parent evaluation of conferences and written materials.

The open ended items on the interview, survey, questionnaire, and evaluations were reviewed and a compilation of concerns and issues addressed was formulated.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Parent involvement enhanced through a parent education program was found to be an effective method of increasing children's school performance. Parent education programs which involved selected relevant reading materials (Rhodes and Hill, 1985), and which contained concrete suggestions for parent-child interaction (Lautenschlager and Hertz, 1984) constituted effective parent education programs. Simple reading materials in the form of booklets were found to be effective guides to assist parents by offering specific directions for coping with their child's learning disability (McCall, 1984). Learning packets for parents designed in question and answer form were positively received by parents (Mire, 1980; Criscuolo, 1980) and therefore effective in parent education. The focus on specific techniques for parents to utilize in working with their child with the support of an administrator in a series of conferences designed for information

exchange and motivation (Bristor, 1987; Van Devender, 1988) was found to be an effective parent education program.

Ann Kahn, 1987 National PTA president, stated that parents and teachers are a team and must work together to help develop strategies to solve children's school problems. Kahn urged the use of parent-teacher meetings as an effective communication technique (cited in Criscuolo, 1987).

The United States Department of Education reported, "Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers.... Research on both gifted and disadvantaged children shows that home efforts can greatly improve student achievement" (Finn, 1986, p. 7). Parents need a support system to help them through the main crisis points experienced as they deal with their child's reading or learning disabilities. The perception and acceptance of a child's learning disability by the child's family are the success of any support program (McLoughlin, 1985).

Parents needed education and support in their parenting role to learn how to provide encouragement to their child to help him or her solve their own problems. A program providing both an educational and counseling component aided parents in understanding their child's

disabilities. Once parents gained knowledge of their child's disabilities, they determined the therapy needed, resources to utilize, and people to help meet their child's needs. They matched the treatments to the child's symptoms and were better able to judge the effectiveness of the therapy (Kronick, 1980).

Baron, Baron, and MacDonald (1983) reported that many parents were reluctant to become involved with their child's school. They found, however, that involvement between parents and school personnel greatly increased the child's chances of academic success. They further urged parents to share ideas regarding their child's needs, and to approach a conference with the idea that it is team work and requires a partnership to achieve the utmost benefit for the child. They further insisted that the sooner parents become involved in their child's school, the better off their child will be.

Description of Selected Solutions

One solution to the center's problem of parents who are uninformed or misinformed regarding their child's reading and learning disabilities was a parent education program. This program was delivered to each individual student's parents through implementation of a series of

disabilities. Once parents gained knowledge of their child's disabilities, they determined the therapy needed, resources to utilize, and people to help meet their child's needs. They matched the treatments to the child's symptoms and were better able to judge the effectiveness of the therapy (Kronick, 1980).

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for parents and teachers did enhance communication and parental education.

The pamphlets and reprints of pertinent articles (MacWright, 1985), another part of the solution strategy, were given to parents after each conference. These pamphlets provided additional information to be read and reflected upon for further understanding of their child's disabilities. The pamphlets, along with the monthly conferences, provided a continuing parent education support program.

The solution to the center's problem of parents of students who are uninformed or misinformed regarding their child's reading or learning disabilities was four-fold. The first phase of the solution was the implementation of parent conferences. Lautenschlager and Hertz (1984) designed a parent education program which involved a series of monthly conferences for exchange of information. Van Devender (1988), Brown and Jalongo (cited in Criscuolo, 1987) also urged a program for implementing communication between parents and teachers.

The second phase of the solution was the development of parents' insight into their child's disabilities through relevant reading materials presented to the parents. Bristor (1987), Criscuolo

(1980), and Rhodes and Hill (1985) advocated the use of pamphlets and selected reading materials to aid and encourage parents in their efforts to assist their children in academic activities at home.

The third phase was the presentation of two programs on reading and learning disabilities (Heath, 1987). Smith (1988) stated that most parents need the direction and encouragement of the school in order to know what to do to assist their children in academic activities and intellectual development. These group programs supplied additional encouragement and motivation to parents.

The fourth phase was the contact and establishment of communication lines via phone calls between the center and school (Carlucci, 1987). This provided three-way communication among the parents, school, and the center.

In summary, this four phase strategy of parent conferences, followed by relevant reading material in the form of pamphlets, two group programs, and school telecommunication with the teacher, was an effective parent education program. This program was effective because it provided communication and support to parents and fostered insight into their child's reading and learning disabilities. The pamphlets and other relevant

materials gave additional information to be read and reflected upon by the parents for further understanding and reinforcement of their knowledge regarding their child's disabilities.

Report of Action Taken

Beginning in March, each new student's parents were asked to respond to a 20 item questionnaire, to assess their understanding of the specific nature and symptoms of their child's deficiency. This was done while the child was being evaluated by the center's director.

After the initial evaluation, the parents met with the center's director for a conference. In this initial conference, the director explained the evaluation results and answered questions related to the child's disabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. The director asked the parents to respond to a ten question oral interview at the end of the conference.

Once each month, the parents and the director held a conference to discuss the child's disabilities and progress. Each conference was followed by the presentation of relevant reading material in the form of pamphlets or other germane reading materials for parents to take home and read. After one month, parents were given the Homework Survey of 20 items to ascertain

parents' skills and abilities to assist their child with academic activities at home and to maintain realistic expectations regarding their child's capabilities.

In May and September, a date was set to present a program to parents on reading and learning disabilities. Invitations were issued in written form and the teachers at the center were asked to attend.

In August, a packet of pamphlets written by the director was given to a school psychologist, clinical psychologist, classroom teacher, Chapter I teacher, social worker, and pediatrician. They were asked to critique the information and give feedback to the writer.

At the termination of the student's program, or at the retest session, parents answered the 20 item Parent Questionnaire to indicate their understanding of their child's reading and learning difficulties.

The questionnaire, homework survey, interview, and parent's assessment of reading materials were scored. The results of all information gathering instruments were recorded in table form, and through an item analysis of open-ended and information items to assess the parents' growth in insight and understanding of their child's disabilities, as well as the ability to work effectively with realistic expectations of their

child's performance. Open ended items were recorded and reviewed for further information and feedback on the parent education program.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Objective One, that parents will be informed as to the specific type of problem their child is experiencing, was measured by a questionnaire of 20 items. The Parent Questionnaires were given to the parents at the beginning of the student's program before the initial evaluation and first parent conference. The Parent Questionnaire is presented in Appendix C. The specific objective was that parents would be informed as to the type of problem their child was experiencing. The 20 item questionnaire was scored with ten positive or negative responses, four open-ended items, four checklists, and two information items.

The standard of achievement of 70% positive responses, on the 10 positive or negative items, with 7 out of 10 items scored positively was met by 72% of the 25 parents' questionnaires. This score of 72% positive responses was an increase of 30% over the initial questionnaire of 42% positive responses. The negative

responses dropped 23% with only 25% negative responses on the post questionnaire. On the initial questionnaire, there were 24 omitted items out of 250 responses, while the post questionnaire contained only seven omitted items out of 250 responses. This drop of 7% omissions indicated a parental willingness to participate, as well as a knowledge and understanding of their children's reading and learning disabilities. Table 2 summarizes the positive and negative results of both the initial Parent Questionnaire and the post Parent Questionnaire.

Table 2

Parent Questionnaire

10 Positive/Negative Items Demonstrating Parental Understanding and Emotional Reactions to Their Child's Reading and Learning Disabilities

#Parents	#Items	Positive Items	Negative Items	Omitted
Initial				
25	250	105	120	24
		42%	48%	10%
Post				
25	250	181	62	7
		72%	25%	3%
		+30%	-23%	-7%

The four checklists proved highly beneficial in pinpointing the parents' concerns. In item five the parents were asked to check the academic areas in which their child was experiencing difficulties. Fifteen academic areas were optional. The average number of areas checked was five on the post questionnaire compared to an average of six areas on the initial questionnaire, indicating a drop of one academic area. This demonstrated the parents' concern over academic performance. Item six, inquiring the grade level at which the student began experiencing difficulties, ranged from kindergarten to eighth grade. The average grade level was third.

On the checklist, in item fifteen, parents were asked to check four areas in which they would like to receive additional information. An average of two responses on the initial and post questionnaires was recorded. The areas of greatest concern were learning potential and reading disabilities.

On item nineteen, "When my child asks for help, I feel...", parents responded to both the initial and post questionnaire with an average of 3 positive responses out of 16 optional positive/negative responses. The items checked dropped from an average of one negative to less than one-half negative response.

The open-ended items of the questionnaire, items 2, 3, 4, and 20 were viewed individually. Item two, "Briefly summarized, my child's problem is ..." was an open-ended item in which responses were categorized as cognitive difficulties or performance difficulties. Table 3 presents a summary of responses to item 2.

Table 3

Parent Questionnaire Item 2 Responses of 25 Parents "Briefly summarized, my child's problem is..."

	#Prequestionnaire	#Postquestionnaire	#Changes
Cognitive	4	14	+10
	16%	56%	+40%
Performance	21	11	-10
	84%	44%	-40%

Initially, 84%, or 21 out of 25, responded that the difficulty was one of performance, while 16%, or 4 out of 25 responded, that the difficulty was in cognition. This indicates a lack of understanding of the actual problem. In the parent questionnaire administered at the reevaluation, 56%, or 14 out of 25, viewed the difficulty their child was experiencing as cognitive; while 44%, or 11 out of 25, recognized a performance

difficulty. This data indicated that more parents achieved an understanding of the underlying cause of their child's problems, rather than reacting to the symptoms.

In item three, "These difficulties are caused by ...", the responses were categorized into four categories. The categories were performance, cognitive, affective, and unknown.

Table 4

Parent Questionnaire Item 3 Responses of 25 Parents "These difficulties are caused by..."

Category	#Prequestionnaire	#Postquestionnaire	Changes
Performance	3	2	- 1
	12%	8%	- 4%
Cognitive	3	10	+ 7
	12%	40%	+28%
Affective	8	4	- 4
	32%	16%	-16%
Unknown	11	9	- 2
	44%	36%	- 8%

Twelve percent, or 3 out of 25, parents expressed that the cause of their child's problem was the child's performance. Twelve percent, or 3 out of 25, also expressed that there was a cognitive difficulty that caused the problem. Thirty-two percent, or 8 out of 25, parents stated an affective cause such as lack of interest, motivation, or low self-esteem as the cause of their child's difficulty. Forty-four percent, or 11 out of 25, parents expressed that the cause of their child's difficulties was unknown. After the program 8%, or 2 out of 25, stated a performance cause of their child's problem. Forty percent, or 10 of 25 parents, indicated a cognitive cause which was an increase of 28%. This shows parental understanding of the actual cause of the disability. The affective cause was given by 16%, or 4 out of 25 parents who responded. This was a decrease of 16%, or 4 out of 25 parents, indicating parental understanding of the real cause of their child's difficulties, rather than focusing on an affective result or symptom of the child's frustration and inability to cope. The unknown category for the cause of the problem was given by 36%, or 9 of 25 parents. This was a drop of 8% in parental responses, indicating that the cause of the difficulty was unknown. Objective One that parents are informed as to the type of problem

their child is experiencing has been met.

In item four, "Because of my child's problem, he or she is unable to ...", parents showed the greatest concern over reading ability and overall school performance.

Table 5

Parent Questionnaire Item 4 Responses of 25 Parents "Because of my child's problems, she or he is unable to..."

Category	#Prequestionnaire	#Postquestionnaire	Changes
Reading and	19	17	- 2
School Performance	76%	68%	- 8%
Unknown	6	4	- 2
	24%	16%	- 8%
Concentration	0	2	+ 2
		8%	+ 8%
Affective	0	2	+ 2
		8%	+ 8%

On the initial questionnaire, 76%, or 19 out of 25 parents, expressed that a result of the problem was their child's inability to perform in reading and in

overall academic skills. On the post questionnaire, 68%, or 17 of 25 parents, expressed concern over reading and school performance. The number of "unknown" responses dropped from 6 to 4. Two parents responded that as a result of their child's problem, the child was unable to concentrate. Other parents responded that the problem had caused their children to have difficulties with their self-image in relationship to school. The open-ended responses indicated that parents were looking beyond the actual academic performance to other problems created by the disability.

On item twenty, "My feelings today about my child's reading and learning are...", the responses were categorized as positive or negative responses, or omitted. On the initial questionnaire of 25 items, there were 44%, or 11 positive responses, 40%, or 10 negative responses, and 16%, or 4 of the parents omitted the item. On the post questionnaire, also of 25 items, the responses were 80%, or 20 positive, 18%, or 5 negative, and 6% or 1 omitted. This demonstrated an increase in positive responses of thirty-six percent, or an increase of 8 parents who expressed positive feelings about their child's reading and learning. Appendix J presents a sample of parents' responses on the post questionnaire.

Information item number 14, "Do other members of the family have learning difficulties?" was asked to ascertain background and exposure to learning disabilities. One out of 25 responded that other family members have learning disabilities. Twenty out of 25, or 88%, responded that there were no other family members with learning disabilities. On the post questionnaire, only 7 out of 25, or 28% responded that there were other members of the family with learning disabilities. This is compared to 4%, or 1 out of 25, responding initially that there were other learning disabled family members. This is an increase of 24%. Fifteen out of 25 responded that there were no learning disabled people in their families. This is a decrease of 28%. This response demonstrated that parents became more aware of reading and learning disabilities through their education program.

Information item number 18, "I would rather have someone else provide extra help outside of school." was, after analysis, considered neither positive nor negative, but rather a complicated personal response involving too many variables interfering with classification as positive or negative.

Objective Two, "Parents will develop an understanding of their child's reading and learning

disabilities," was measured by the ten question oral Parent Interview, which followed the reporting of the initial evaluation results. The first nine items were scored with either positive or negative responses to indicate parental understanding of their child's learning or academic difficulties. The objective was met as 93%, or 209 of 225, positive responses were scored on the interviews. This response indicated that parents felt that they had a clearer understanding of their child's problem and understood why their child was unable to perform with students on average level.

The open-ended question, number 10, "In future conferences I would like ..." elicited further parental questions which resulted in extended conferences and communication. Samples of the parents' responses to the open-ended questions are presented in Appendix K. The comments were so lengthy and numerous that the author simply presented a sampling.

Objective Three stated, "Parents will be able to assist their child with academic exercises with greater effectiveness and more realistic expectations." This objective was measured by the Homework Survey for Parents. Twenty-five parents scored positive responses to 260 out of 500 items. This 52%, or 10.4 out of 20 items, scored positively did not meet Objective Three to

achieve 14 out of 20 positive responses on the Homework Survey. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 6

Parents' Actions and Emotions Relevant to Assisting Their Child with Academic Activities

Parents	#Items	Positive	Negative	Omitted
N=25	500	260	145	95
		52%	29%	19%

Objective Four provided that parents will have the opportunity to attend two programs designed to present information on reading and learning disabilities. This objective was measured by the attendance at two programs. One program was attended by 32 people. One hundred invitations were made for both meetings. The second program was attended by 34 people. Since the attendance number was projected at 30, a successful fruition of Objective Four was obtained.

Objective Five stated that communication will be established with the student's school through a phone

conference, was measured by the completion of a phone conference with the students' teachers. Of 50 calls attempted, 49 were successfully completed.

Objective Six provided that literature and materials available for parents from multiple sources be reviewed and rated. This objective was measured by the Parent Evaluation of Written Materials found in Appendix H. Eight out of 10 questions were scored with positive and negative responses. Six out of 8 positive responses were recorded thus successfully meeting the standards of Objective Six.

Professionals were also asked to review the pocket brochure written by the writer and to evaluate it with a Professional Critique of Pocket Brochure consisting of six items. Items one through five were scored with positive and negative responses. Item six was an open ended item for suggestions, additions, and deletions. The professionals who previewed the brochure were a family social worker, nurse, teachers, clinical psychologist, school psychologist, and an artist. The critique revealed 68 positive responses and 7 negative responses out of a total of 75 items. Several constructive comments were given on item 6. The comments were considered and specific alterations were made in the pocket brochure before the final

publication.

Conclusions

According to Helm and Kozloff (1986), parents participating in extensive training programs felt greater confidence and had better understanding of ways to interact effectively in helping their children with specific difficulties. They also found that continued interaction with professionals resulted in improved performance and behavior. This extensive ongoing program with parental/professional involvement proved to be an effective program of parent education. By offering continued guidance in the form of conferences (Brown and Jalongo, cited in Criscuolo, 1987) and booklets, or other reading material (Auten, 1980), parents can develop an understanding of their child's reading or learning disabilities.

Parents demonstrated their understanding of their children's reading and learning disabilities through their responses to the positive items on the Parent Questionnaire. This 72% positive response, or 181 out of 250 items, was an increase of 30% over the initial questionnaire results. This indicated that parents did indeed increase their understanding through the parent education program.

When parental stress was reduced through support and true collaboration with the teacher, there was increased understanding for both parents and students which benefited the entire family (Seefeldt, 1985). This was definitely an effective strategy, as parents demonstrated in their responses to the Parent Questionnaire given at the time of reevaluation. Parents responded positively to 72%, or 36 out of 50, items designed to measure parents' feeling about their children's reading and learning disabilities (Items 19 and 20). On item 19, "When my child asks for help I feel...", parents responded with an average of 3 positive responses and less than one negative response. This indicated that parental emotions related to their child's academic work were positive.

Item 20 also elicited an affective response that was open-ended. "My feelings today about my child's reading and learning are..." was answered with 80%, or 20 out of 25, positive responses. This increase of 36% positive responses was attributed to the communication between teachers and parents through conferences and the knowledge gained through selected reading materials.

In the parent interviews, the parents were even more positive in their response with 93% positive responses. This demonstrated parental understanding of

their children's problems. Many parents expressed relief over receiving and understanding their child's diagnosis. Several parents said that they could now see their child in a more realistic light and accept their child's difficulties with greater patience and understanding. A majority of the parents requested to be kept informed about their child's progress on a regular basis.

The Homework Survey to measure the parents' ability to effectively assist their child in homework activities revealed that parents responded positively on only 52%, or 260 out of 500 items. This followed the reading of homework tips and minor conferences relevant to homework activities. It is now deemed necessary to provide extensive instruction to parents to help them develop more effective techniques for homework activities. One item scored negatively was, "When I become frustrated I let my child know it." Obviously, parents need constructive advice and support in specific ways to cope with their own anxieties. Sixty percent of the parents responded negatively to item 6 on the Homework Survey which stated, "When my child is struggling to read, I insist that every word be sounded out." This technique is definitely one that will bring quick negative reactions and frustration to both parents

and children. Further instruction and guidance is definitely in order for parents of students enrolled in the center.

The attendance at the two group programs was, of course, voluntary. Those parents who were interested did attend. They were open and responsive to suggestions and interactive discussions. These programs will continue to be scheduled to provide further instruction and support for parents. These programs also offer parents an opportunity to meet other parents who share the same problems.

Phone conversations with schools were completed with almost 100% success. Teachers were responsive and cooperative in efforts to provide reinforcement activities, and feedback on the child's performance in school. In contacting the schools, the communication network often extended to the school principals. Phone contacts were made with principals on 18 occasions.

The literature and materials provided to parents were initially in the form of photocopied pages and prepared booklets purchased by the center. As the implementation period proceeded, the writer began to research and summarize materials in laymen's terminology to make the parents' reading materials more concise and readable. It was also found that most parents did not

have the background to read the technical journal articles, or professional research. When provided materials written in nonprofessional terminology, parents were eager to receive the information. The brief articles were later combined into a pocket brochure in question and answer form. The parents' response to this brochure was extremely positive. These brochures will continue to be used as a resource for parents (see Appendix G).

In addition to the reading materials presented to parents, a list of free or inexpensive materials was completed and given to parents. This list was composed of materials that had been previewed and recommended for parents to read. This list has been a welcomed resource, especially for parents of students who are just receiving a diagnosis of a reading or learning disability. By ordering materials from either the International Reading Association or Association of Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities, parents will be placed on a mailing list to receive information about publications, and organizations.

The implementation of a parent education program has given an incentive to the faculty to be even more responsive to and anticipatory of parents' needs. It has created an awareness on the part of all staff

members. This parent education program will be continued and further modifications will be made in the program for instructing parents on homework techniques.

In conclusion, five of the six objectives were met. The parent education program was a success and has created a cognizance of the needs of parents. Parents do respond to communication with professionals, and to support through an ongoing process of education. Providing parents with written materials that they can take home to read and reflect upon at their leisure has proven to be an effective strategy for parent education. Individual conferences were a successful part of the parent education program. The group sessions seem to fill a need for parents to interact and express themselves. The implementation of the parent education program has proven to be an asset to the center's comprehensive program.

Recommendations

The writer has several recommendations based on the successful results of this Practicum. First, the administration of the Parent Questionnaire should be continued. Valuable insight into parental needs can be ascertained as parents express their feelings, attitudes, and reactions to their children's reading and

learning disabilities. This immediate input from the questionnaire thereby facilitates the director's response in helping the parents meet their needs. Second, the parent conferences are deemed a necessary part of the parent education process and must be continued as they provide ongoing support and an opportunity for parent education.

The third recommendation is the provision of selected reading information to parents. Since parents, in general, are unable to locate pertinent information on their own, it will be assumed as a responsibility of the center to make information available.

The fourth recommendation is to further develop communication lines between the center and the school. This an excellent way to insure carry-over of the child's success and help parents maintain an active involvement in their child's education. In addition, the telecommunication program has served as a public relations network for the center.

The fifth recommendation is the development of a more indepth parent program to help parents in assisting their children with homework. This is especially needed with children who have disabilities.

An unanticipated outcome of this practicum was the pocket brochure. This project developed quite naturally

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as the need for succinct, readable information written in laymen's terms became obvious. The excellent response to the brochure was also unanticipated, and justified the extensive effort, and expense required to produce it.

Finally, a perpetual parent education program is recommended to insure the best possible achievement for the child. Parental understanding of a child's strengths, weaknesses, and disabilities can enhance the child's education. It is therefore vital to involve parents in their child's education and to provide a parent education program to promote the parents' perspicaciousness.

Dissemination

The results of this Practicum will be submitted to the Association of Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities. A summary of the results will be included in the Reading, Math, and Learning Center's monthly newsletter. The pocket brochure, "Questions Parents Often Ask" will be mailed to the 250 people on the center's mailing list. In addition, multiple copies will be given to the professionals who reviewed the brochure and requested copies for their clients, or patients.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENT OPINION
AS I SEE MY CHILD

PARENT OPINION

As I See My Child

Please put a check or checks in the appropriate columns.

1. I understand the type of learning or reading problem my child is having. ___Yes ___No

2. I feel that my child has

___been as successsful as he or she is capable of being.

___has failed to achieve to his or her potential.

___is just getting by.

3. My child has difficulties with following directions.

___Yes ___No

4. My child has difficulties with homework activities.

___Yes ___No

5. I feel unprepared to offer help to my child.

___Yes ___No

APPENDIX B

INVITATION TO PARENTS' MEETING

You are cordially invited to attend an informal meeting especially for parents of children with reading or learning disabilities.

Place: Reading Skills Center
17001 N.E. 20 Ave.
North Miami Beach, FL 33162

Dates:	May 19, 1989:	September 22, 1989:
Time:	4:00-5:00 P.M.	7:30-8:30 P.M.

Purpose:

* Present techniques and strategies
* Help your child at home with reading and homework
* Discuss reading and learning disabilities
* Participate in Question and answer time

Refreshments will be served!

APPENDIX C

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please put a check or checks in the appropriate columns.

1. I understand the type of learning or reading problem my child is having. __Yes __No
2. Briefly summarized, my child's problem is ____ _____.
3. These difficulties are caused by_____ _____.
4. Because of my child's problem, he or she is unable to_____ _____.
5. My child is having difficulties in the following academic areas:

__reading comprehension	__written composition
__reading vocabulary	__spelling
__word recognition	__math computation
__phonics	__math concepts and
__oral reading	applications
__science	__study skills
__English	__test taking
__social studies	__oral expression

6. My child has experienced academic problems since (circle the grade level): Kindergarten, Grade 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
7. My child has difficulties in behavior

___In the classroom

___On the playground

___In the neighborhood

___At home

___With peers

___With teachers

___With family members

8. My child expresses that he or she does not

___like school

___want to go to school

___like the teacher

___like the other students

9. I feel that my child has

___been as successful as he or she is capable of being

___has failed to achieve to his or her potential

___is just getting by

10. My child has difficulties with following directions

___Yes ___No

11. My child has difficulties with homework activities.

___Yes ___No

12. My child has previously been evaluated by a specialist. ___Yes ___No

13. I understand the diagnosis of my child's problem.

___Yes ___No

14. Do other members of the family have learning difficulties? ___Yes ___No

15. I would like more information on my child's

___reading disabilities

___learning disabilities

___academic levels

___learning potential

16. I would like to assist my child at home.

___Yes ___No

17. I feel unprepared to offer help to my child.

___Yes ___No

18. I would rather have someone else provide extra help outside of school. ___Yes ___No

19. When my child asks for help I feel

___valuable	___interested
___organized	___angry
___rewarded	___satisfied
___impatient	___inadequate
___frustrated	___overwhelmed
___eager	___confused
___happy	___worthless
___useful	disorganized

20. My feelings today about my child's reading and learning are _____.

_____

APPENDIX D

PARENT INTERVIEW

PARENT INTERVIEW

1. The conference was beneficial and helpful.

   ___Yes ___No

2. I was pleased to have been asked to participate in this conference. ___Yes ___No

3. New information about my child's learning was presented and explained to me. ___Yes ___No

4. My child's test results were clearly explained to me. ___Yes ___No

5. I understand my child's performance and learning pattern better now than I did before the conference. ___Yes ___No

6. I would like to have regular conferences.

   ___Yes ___No

7. I feel very positive about this experience.

   ___Yes ___No

8. As a result of this conference, I feel better able to cope with my child's reading or learning difficulties. ___Yes ___No

9. I feel that there was two way communication in this conference. ___Yes ___No

10. In future conferences I would like _____

_____

APPENDIX E

HOMEWORK SURVEY FOR PARENTS

HOMEWORK SURVEY FOR PARENTS

1. I read to my child on at least four nights each week. _____Yes _____No

2. An estimate of my child's attention span for the following activities:

   reading silently _____minutes

   playing alone _____minutes

   playing with friends _____minutes

   homework _____minutes

   drawing or artwork _____minutes

   listening to:

   stories _____minutes

   TV _____minutes

   music _____minutes

   friends _____minutes

3. I know it is best to work approximately _____ minutes.

4. The best time to work with my child is_____ because

   _____

5. When material such as social studies or science is too difficult for my child I

   _____read it to him or her.

   _____give the answers myself.

   _____just say, forget it.

6. When my child is struggling to read, I

___insist that every word be sounded out

___minimize frustration by supplying most unknown words

7. When my child has 2 to 3 hours of homework, I

___scold my child for not working faster or harder

___acknowledge that my child probably could not cope at school

8. When there are concepts that are not known or understood, I

___try to explain them 2 or 3 times, then stop

___continue explaining up to 7 or 8 times before stopping

9. When my child begins to squirm or whine, I

___initiate a change of activity

___scold my child and demand attention

10. When my child obviously lies about school performance I

___lecture on the evil of lying and punish my child

___explain that I know it is not true and that I understand

11. When I have become frustrated I

___let my child know it

___leave the room on the pretense that I have something urgent to do

12. When the majority of the papers sent home by the teacher are failing grades, I

___offer assistance and understanding

___become angry and show it

13. When my child shows anxiety over school work, I

___offer encouragement

___assure my child that it is very difficult

14. To help my child at home I can _____

_____

_____ .

15. The most important thing for my child is

___become a good student

___ maintain a positive self concept

16. To insure my child's success I insist on

___working extra hard and extra hours

___provide successful nonacademic experiences

17. To show my child how much I care, I support him by

___showing interest in many school activities

___showing school is not really that important in his life.

18. To reward my child I

___read to him

___let him watch extra TV programs

19. When working on homework activities I classify the overall atmosphere as ___positive ___negative

20. Some ways I have found to practice reading in a nonacademic fashion at home are to have my child read the following:

APPENDIX F

SUGGESTED READING MATERIALS FOR PARENTS

SUGGESTED READING MATERIALS FOR PARENTS

The following materials may be ordered from:

ACLD, Inc.
Literary Depository
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234

Handbook for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities by Robert Schoonover

Attention Deficit Disorders-Booklet for Parents by Larry B. Silver, M.D.

Points for Parents prepared by Carol Wearne, E,D.,M.

Learning Disabilities: A Handbook by B. Bader, K. Graber, K. Gunier, & G. Schoenthal

Helping the LD Student With Homework by S. Stevens

The International Reading Association offers the following materials which can be ordered from:

Order Dept.
International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, Delaware 19714-8139

Parent Brochures

Your Home Is Your Child's First School

You Can Encourage Your Child to Read

Good Books Make Reading Fun for Your Child by Glenna Davis Sloan

Summer Reading Is Important by John Micklos, Jr.

You Can Use Television to Stimulate Your Child's Reading Habits by Nicholas P. Criscuolo

Studying: A Key to Success...Ways Parents Can Help by Ann Erickson

You Can Help Your Child in Reading by Using the Newspaper by Nicholas P. Criscuolo

Booklists of newly published favorites selected by students:

100 Favorite Paperbacks-1989

Children's Choices

Young Adults' Choices

Single copies of each parent brochure are available free upon request with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Books:

Children, Parents and Reading by M. Boehnlein and B. Hagar

Booklets:
Helping Your Child Become a Reader by N. Rose

How Can I Prepare My Young Child for Reading? by P. Grinnel

You Can Help Your Young Child With Writing by M. Baghban

You Can Encourage Your High School Student to Read by J. Myers

The following materials may be ordered from:
U.S. Dept. of Education
Washington, D.C. 20208

What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning

The following booklets may be ordered from:
Scriptographic Booklets
200 State Road
Channing L. Bete Co., Inc.
South Deerfield, MA 01373

About Your Child's Emotional Health
Self Esteem
About Making Decisions
About Test Anxiety
About Divorce
Peer Pressure
About Values

APPENDIX G

PARENT BROCHURE
QUESTIONS PARENTS OFTEN ASK

QUESTIONS PARENTS OFTEN ASK

Reading Math & Learning Centers

830 South State Road 7
Plantation, Florida 33317
Phone: 583-1929

17001 N.E. 20th Avenue
North Miami Beach, Florida 33162
Phone: 940-3922

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What causes reading and learning disabilities?

The cause of all reading and learning disabilities is not known. There are several theories or ideas that are being researched. One idea is that disabilities are caused by viruses or injuries to the brain. Another theory is that learning and reading disabilities are hereditary and occur in families.

What is a reading disability?

A reading disability is an inability to read in spite of intensive reading instruction. *(Harris & Hodges, eds., 1981)*

When should a child begin to read?

There is no exact age for a child to begin reading, but most students are ready to learn when they are six years old.

What influences a child to read?

Having reading materials in the home and having parents, brothers, and sisters who read influences the child to read.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a written language learning disability that affects the development of reading, writing, and spelling.

Are those with learning disabilities retarded?

No, LD students have near average, average, or above average intellectual ability.
(Work & Whitehurst, 1983)

Can a student have a math disability?

Yes, a student can have a math disability. About 6% of all students have difficulties in math, called acalculia. Math computation may be difficult for some, while math concepts or applications may be the major difficulties of other students. Math disabilities are a result of sequencing, reasoning, and memory difficulties.
(Garnett & Fleischner, 1987)

Is psychological counseling a recommended treatment for learning disabilities?

Yes, often LD students need therapy since they must deal with a great deal of stress and must learn to cope with their handicapping condition. Teenagers especially become depressed and need support and help in coping with their self-image in order to prevent underachievement, delinquent behavior, depression, and/or even suicide.
(Levine, 1988)

How many students are learning disabled?

It is estimated that between three and twenty-five percent of all students are learning disabled. The wide spread between three and twenty-five indicates that there is disagreement over the numbers and characteristics of LD students.
In the state of Florida there are an estimated 70,000 children and young adults with learning disabilities.
(Martinez, 1989)

What are learning disabilities?

Learning disabilities are conditions that interfere with the student's ability to learn. They are mix-ups in the way the brain processes information from the senses.
(Schoonover, 1983, p. 9)
The Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities adopted the following definition of learning disabilities on September 22, 1984:

> Specific Learning Disabilities is a chronic condition of presumed neurological origin which selectively interferes with the development, integration and/or demonstration of verbal and/or non-verbal abilities.
> Specific Learning Disabilities exists as a distinct handicapping condition in the presence of average to superior intelligence, adequate sensory and motor systems, and adequate learning opportunities. The condition varies in its manifestations and in the degree of severity.
> Throughout life the condition can affect self-esteem, education, vocation, socialization, and/or daily living activities.

What is ADD?

ADD is Attention Deficit Disorder which is not classified as a learning disability, even though many ADD students are under-achievers. The child diagnosed with ADD will have difficulty focusing attention, will not seem to listen, will have difficulty concentrating on activities, will be easily distracted, and will have difficulty completing activities. The ADD child will also act impulsively, which will result in difficulty in organizing and completing activities, and waiting for his or her turn in activities. Hyperactivity is another characteristic of ADD which does not occur in all ADD children. The ADD child has difficulty remaining still .
(Komm, 1982).

Are all learning disabilities the same?

No two individuals with learning disabilities are ever alike. Learning disabilities range from very slight to extremely severe. They affect individuals in very different ways. Some disabilities are found in the attention span, others in written or spoken language or communication areas, spatial orientation, memory, fine motor control, and sequencing ability. Some individuals have only one disabled area while others may be affected in several areas.
(Levine, 1988)

What are the most common learning disabilities?

Language disorders involving written language are common disabilities. Written language includes reading, spelling, and writing. Children with early language difficulties are at the highest risk for problems in reading and writing in school.
(Butler, 1983)

Another common kind of learning disorder is difficulty in keeping attention focused. This handicap affects the way the brain organizes the ability to concentrate. These individuals appear to continually tune in and tune out, so that their performance is inconsistent.
(Levine, 1988)

What is the best school placement for an LD student?

According to law, the LD student is to be provided with the "least restrictive environment" (*P. L. 94-142*). For the LD student this means placement in a regular school classroom setting for part of the day. For the remainder of the day, he attends a resource class with a teacher who is specially trained to work with LD students.

How can those with reading and learning disabilities be helped?

They can be helped through understanding the disability and by preserving the child's self-concept or self-esteem. Bypass strategies or techniques for learning can be used by providing the necessary materials, equipment, and instruction so that the students can utilize their strengths while working to improve their weaknesses.

There have been many announced cures for LD students. Do these "cures" work?

Research has shown the following *(Levine, 1987)* :

Vitamin treatment	Does not work
Creeping and crawling	Does not work
Special diets without food additives (artificial coloring and synthetic flavors)	works with only 1-2%
Patterning exercise	Does not work
Hypnosis	Questionable
Inappropriate drugs such as antihistamines	Does not work
Diets without refined sugar	Does not work

What treatment works for LD students?

The most successful treatment for LD students has been instruction and attention from teachers who have been trained or educated in special education.

What causes students to reverse letters, words, or numbers?

This reversal tendency or mirror imaging is a spatial orientation difficulty that interferes with the student's left-right directionality development. The student may confuse b's and d's, p's and q's, "was" and "saw", as well as many other similar letter combinations.
(Levine, 1988)

Do children suffer from stress?

Yes, children do suffer from stress. These stress-producing situations for children are *(Grune & Brooks, 1985)*:

(a) physical illness
(b) pain
(c) concentration
(d) overexertion
(e) anxious anticipation of failure due to overly strict or high parental expectations
(f) fear and tension before a test or during a visit to the dentist
(g) being a latchkey child after school
(h) being teased about physical features, allergies or asthma
(i) humiliation
(j) fear of abandonment
(k) feelings of not being loved
(l) racial slurs
(m) living in a dangerous neighborhood
(n) heavy doses of violent television
(o) physical abuse
(p) and even joyous overstimulation
(q) fear of not being accepted by peers

What can be done about a child's stress?

Parents must provide a positive support system and show understanding and empathy toward their children. They must use a sense of humor, and offer endless encouragement, hope and support for their child.

Cautions

Do NOT humiliate the child. Self-esteem must be maintained or the student will stop trying.

Do NOT be negative; rephrase corrections in a positive way.

Do NOT make a cripple of the child, but do show empathy and understanding.

Do NOTdo the child's work for him.

Do NOT be afraid to be firm. It makes the child feel secure to know that the parent is in control.

Do NOT expect an "overnight cure", but do expect and encourage gradual improvement.

What does it mean?

DEVELOPMENTAL READING - Reading instruction for all students at all levels that is not remedial.
CORRECTIVE READING - Special reading instruction for students with minor reading disabilities or difficulties who are usually instructed in the regular classroom.
REMEDIAL READING - Highly specialized reading instruction for students who are two years or more below grade level in their reading achievement. Students who need remedial instruction are usually taught by a specialist in small groups or individually.
ENRICHMENT READING - Reading instruction for students achieving above grade level to supplement their instruction by expanding the student's knowledge and skills.

AUDITORY ATTENTION SPAN AND MEMORY - Length of time a person can concentrate on one thing, remember what is learned, and maintain interest through listening or hearing.
VISUAL ATTENTION SPAN AND MEMORY - Length of time a person can concentrate on one thing, remember what is learned, and maintain interest through seeing or visual contact.
VISUAL MOTOR MEMORY - Length of time a person can remember and reproduce a drawing, a design or a symbol such as a word.
VISUAL DISCRIMINATION - Ability to distinguish shapes.
AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION - Ability to distinguish between sounds or words that are similar.
SPATIAL ORIENTATION - Ability to understand and use concepts of up-down, front-back, left-right, and to be aware of one's movement and position in space.
VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT - The growth in words known through instruction, reading, writing, and activities such as classifying, analyzing, and placing in context.
WORD ATTACK SKILLS - Ability to use phonics skills to sound out the word by breaking the word into syllables to identify or pronounce the word.
DECODING - Translating written words into spoken words or meanings. Decoding involves word attack skills, phonics, memory, sequencing, and sight vocabulary knowledge.
READING COMPREHENSION - Understanding what is read.

Suggestions for helping your child read and learn

Talk with your child. Ask your child questions about what he or she likes about school.
Listen to your child express himself or herself. This will help your child learn to use language skills and new vocabulary words.
Repeat what your child says to make sure that you understand and to help clarify the message.
Read to your child with a spirit of enjoyment and pleasure. This will help to develop your child's appreciation of reading.
Make available in your home books, magazines, even comic books for your child to enjoy.
Invest in basic educational toys such as chalkboards, magnetic

letters, alphabet toys, paper, markers, crayons, blocks, and books.
Get library cards for all members of the family and make regular visits to your local library.
Make a habit out of bedtime reading or storytelling.
Encourage writing of letters, stories, lists, diaries, jokes or plays.
Involve the child in family discussions about current events, family outings, vacations or holiday plans.
Include books in family trips, rainy day activities, and gifts.
Develop a home library.

Homework tips

Set a regular time schedule for homework. Right after school is usually the best time, since there are more distractions in the home at night.
Set a regular place that is quiet and comfortable for homework to be done. A desk or table in the child's room is much better than the dining room or kitchen table. It should be cleared of distractions and large enough to hold the necessary books and papers.
Avoid distractions by not allowing the child to receive phone calls or visitors during the homework time.
Organize the necessary supplies and have them conveniently located at the study area in a drawer, box, or basket. Be sure to include paper, pencil, pencil sharpener, erasers, scissors, stapler and extra staples, paper clips, markers, pens, tape, ruler, glue, and dictionary.
Do not try to teach your child's homework. Homework is review and practice of skills already taught. It is the child's work, NOT the parent's!
If the reading level of the material is too difficult, read the assignment to the child.
Offer encouragement and support, but do not sit with the child nor offer continual advice and corrections. The child will quickly get the **wrong** message that the homework is the parent's responsibility, not the child's responsibility.
If parents sit in the child's homework area, they should read something of their own rather than be involved in the child's work. Just being around, but being involved in one's own reading helps set an example and can help the child to continue to work.
Praise your child when he or she has successfully completed an activity or assignment. Do NOT emphasize failures.

If even a simple homework or reading situation becomes emotionally charged, stop it immediately. Nothing constructive will be accomplished; rather negative, insecure feelings can result which can interfere with your child's self-concept development.

Remember, reading and academic success occur in a positive, relaxed atmosphere.

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Researched and compiled by Sarah F. Allison, Ed.D. 1990

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APPENDIX H

PARENT EVALUATION OF WRITTEN MATERIALS

PARENT EVALUATION OF WRITTEN MATERIALS

1. I read the information. ___Yes ___No

2. The reading material was informative. ___Yes ___No

3. The information answered some questions I had regarding my child's difficulties. ___Yes ___No

4. It is beneficial to have material to read at home.
   ____Yes ___No

5. The reading material was clearly written and comprehended.
   ___Yes ___No

6. Practical suggestions were made that gave me guidance to assist my child at home.
   ___Yes ___No

7. The information about my child's difficulties was consistent with my own ideas of the problem.
   __Yes ___No

8. I would like more information on _____

   _____

   _____.

9. Some questions I have about my child's problem:

   _____

   _____

10. From my reading, I am better prepared to help my child with academic activities at home.
    ___Yes ___No

APPENDIX I

PROFESSIONAL CRITIQUE OF POCKET BROCHURE

PROFESSIONAL CRITIQUE OF POCKET BROCHURE

1. Did you read the brochure, "Questions Parents Often Ask"? ____Yes ____No
2. Did you find the information clearly and concisely presented? ____Yes ____No
3. Was the format attractive? ____Yes ____No
4. Would you recommend this brochure to others? ____Yes ____No
5. Is there additional information that you think should be included? ____Yes ____No
6. If you responded, "Yes" to number 5, please give your suggestions for additions, deletions, and/or changes of any type. _____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX J

SAMPLES OF PARENTS' RESPONSES
ITEM 20

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Item 20: My feelings today about my child's reading and learning are...

He is improving rapidly.

She has low self esteem.

Encouraging.

My child's reading and learning has improved a great deal. I am very pleased.

I believe she has been helped by reading tutoring and math tutoring.

I believe reading and study skills tutoring have given my child more confidence in her ability to learn and succeed.

She is really starting to be interested in her work.

I am proud of my child.

Super!

The help she is receiving is keeping he up to grade level.

She has shown great gains.

I believe that the learning potential is there to be nurtured.

He believes in himself and puts total effort into any problem he is faced with.

I know there is nothing this child cannot accomplish.

I must encourage my child to keep her trying and not to feel as if she will never be able to learn.

I feel my child is bright and understands a little about her problem.

Hopeful.

APPENDIX K

SAMPLES OF PARENTS' RESPONSES
ITEM 10

PARENT INTERVIEW FORM

Item 4: How do you feel about these evaluation results?

Sample responses:

-I feel that at last we have an answer to the problem, and much more important, a way to help him.

-I feel they are a guide for us to measure a child's level and gives us an idea where a child is, educationally speaking.

-It pinpoints a child's weaknesses and strengths.

-It gives me insight as to how to approach my child and helps give guidance and support in his weak areas.

-These results reaffirmed the things I felt, but the problem was never evaluated.

Item 5: What changes have you made in your thoughts about your child's performances?

Sample responses:

-I think I can help my son better, because I know now what I can expect and don't blame him for things he can't do yet.

-At first I thought it might be my child misbehaving for attention, but seeing the evaluation proves my child is having difficulty in learning.

-I now know that I need to be patient and give my child reinforcement for what she gets in school.

-I must continue positive reinforcement.

-I will not be impatient, but will offer more support while he is doing his homework.

-I am relieved that I do not have to get upset with my child as I know he is not lazy-it's a real problem.